No 3.
4

An Abſtract of the grieuances of the poore Clerkes of his Maieſties Cuſtome-houſe London, by reaſon of Letters Pattents lately obtained for the erecting of a new Office called the Office of Clerke of the Bils in all his Maieſties Cuſtome-houſes of England, contained likewiſe in briefe in a petition by them exhibited vnto this honorable Aſſembly: as alſo relating the grieuances and inconueniences that do ariſe thereby to many Merchants and Tradeſmen of the Citie of London: as by certificates vnder the hands of neare three hundred of them (annexed to the ſaid Petition) may appeare: viz.

THat they haue bin from their youths trained vp to become Clerkes in his Maieſties ſaid Cuſtome-houſe, there to write and keepe the bookes and Records of his Maieſties Cuſtomes and Reuenues, and to make vp and perfect the accounts thereof to the Audit of his Maieſties Exchequer; by reaſon whereof they are altogether vnexperienced in any other profeſſion or courſe of life.

That their paines, attendants and employments therein are great, daily and almoſt continuall, and yet for the ſame they haue (for the moſt part) no more but ſome 20. *lib.* ſome 10 *lib.* wages a yeare allowed them, and ſome haue no wages at all, but ſuch vailes for making of Searches, and other extraordinary employment with their pen, as they by their induſtrie could get: which vailes do chiefly ariſe by writing out of the Cuſtome bookes (which they did keepe in their ſeuerall charges) Bils of entries, and notes of goods and merchandizes from time to time imported into, or exported out of this Realme, the which they did giue and deliuer to Merchants and Shop-keepers of all trades, whereby they might take notice where to find and prouide themſelues of ſuch wares and commodities as they did trade in. For which the Merchants & Shop-keepers did giue the ſaid Clerks by way of gratuitie and beneuolence (and no otherwiſe) ſome 10. s. a yeare, ſome 13 s. 4 d. a yeare, ſome ſomewhat more or leſſe: which was worth amongſt all the ſaid poore Clerkes 400. *lib. per annum*, or thereabouts; and this was the chiefeſt meanes of maintenance of the ſaid poore Clerkes, their wiues, children and families.

That about the moneth of September 1619. *Alexander Foſter* one of the Pages of his Maieſties Bed-chamber, and *Richard Greame* one of the Marquis of Buckingham his ſeruants (both of them hauing otherwiſe great meanes to liue vpon) did by euil inſtigation, vntrue pretences, and falſe ſuggeſtions, beg and obtaine from the Kings Maieſtie by Letters pattents vnder the great Seale of England a grant for the erecting of the ſaid new Office for certaine yeares in his Maieſties ſaid Cuſtome-houſe, for the deliuering foorth of the ſaid Bils; and that none ſhould doe the ſame but onely they, their Officers and Subſtitutes.

Hence therefore ariſeth the grieuances of the ſaid poore Clerkes: which grieuances, together with the dammage to the Merchant: and Shop-keepers, do conſiſt in theſe particulars following.

1. That the ſaid poore Clerkes meanes to liue vpon (being many, and ſuch as do take great paines in their places to doe his Maieſtie ſeruice) is vnduly begged from them, and conferred vpon two perſons that did neuer do his Maieſtie any ſeruice in the Cuſtome-houſe.

2. That when the ſaid poore Clerkes did by petition become humble ſuppliants vnto the Kings Maieſtie for reliefe herein, and that ſtay might be made of the putting in execution of the ſaid Office, vntill the Lords Commiſſioners of the Treaſurie ſhould certifie his Maieſtie their opinions therein, which his Maieſtie was pleaſed graciouſly to grant. Then Sir *Raphe Freeman* one of the Maſters of Requeſts (who ſithence hath either bought or doth farme the ſame Office) did cauſe your ſuppliants petition and reference thereupon to be obſcured, and ſome of the ſaid poore Clerkes were by Sir *Robert Nanton* caſt into priſon in the Gate-houſe at Weſtminſter, and there kept vntill they had found ſureties to be come bound for them, that they ſhould neuer violate or impeach the ſaid Pattent, by giuing of notes or otherwiſe, although the ſame were to their vtter vndoing; or to the like effect.

3. That by the proceedings aforeſaid the Office was eſtabliſhed to the ſaid Pattentees, and they do farme out the ſame for two hundred pounds a yeare, or elſe haue ſold the ſame to ſuch as do farme it out, and the ſaid poore Clerkes quite debarred from giuing forth of bils, and ſo their chiefeſt meanes to liue vpon taken from them, and yet neuertheleſſe they do performe the ſame ſeruice and attendance as they did before.

4. That ſome of the ſaid Clerkes, which before the grant of the ſaid Pattent did liue well, are not now able to maintaine their families, but are like to be chargeable to the Pariſh where they inhabite, as by certificate of the Pariſhioners of Saint *Mary Hils* Pariſh may appeare. It doth alſo tend to the generall vndoing of all the reſt of the Clerkes, for that they being herein trained vp from their youths, as aforeſaid, ſhall be inforced for want of maintenance to giue ouer their places, although they know not how to employ themſelues in any other honeſt profeſſion or courſe of life.

5. That the giuing forth of the ſaid Bils of entries and notes, haue bin time out of mind vſed by the ſaid Clerks and their predeceſſors, and euer freely permitted to them by the Officers of the ſaid houſe, as a benefit peculiar to them: and not a thing wherein the Kings Maieſtie is any maner of way intereſſed, nor a fit ſubiect to erect an Office vpon, as may appeare to be true by a certificate vnto his Maieſtie, vnder the hands of the moſt part of the Officers of the Cuſtome-houſe.

6. That the ſaid Pattentees are Gentlemen, and in office about his Maieſtie and the Lord Marquis, and neuer any members of the Cuſtome-houſe, and therefore vnfit to be Officers there.

7. That what moneys the ſaid Merchants and Shop-keepers did yearely giue and beſtow vpon the ſaid poore Clerkes for the ſaid bils and notes, they did receiue the ſame thankfully as a beneuolence. But on the contrary, the now Pattentees and their Officers doe impoſe a yearely rate or proportion vpon the ſaid Merchants and Shop-keepers for the ſaid bils; and if they will not giue them their demaunds, they will deliuer them no bils, and ſo do exact and require the ſame as a dutie and fee: and beſides, for want of skill, they do ſo vnſeaſonably deliuer the ſaid bils to them, that they do ſtand them but in little ſtead, to the great dammage and grieuance of the Merchant and Shop-keeper, as by their certificates aforeſaid may alſo appeare.

8. That the premiſſes conſidered, it is not his Maieſties gracious will and pleaſure to vndo many his good ſubiects and ſeruants for the benefit of few, or that wrong may be done to any, to the pleaſuring of particulars, as in this example there is a preſident of both kinds.

9. That the ſaid Pattent is a great hinderance in the well performing of his Maieſties ſeruice in the Cuſtome-houſe, both in the keeping of his bookes and otherwiſe: for when the ſaid Clerkes your ſuppliants are entring downe the bils of entries of merchandizes into the ſaid bookes, and perfecting the ſame for his Maieſties good, euen then the ſaid Pattentees ſubſtitutes doe demaund and will haue the ſaid bookes and bils to take out and recollect their bils for their gaine and profit.

10. That the ſaid Pattent and Office thereupon erected, is in the nature of a Monopoly, and Monopolies for the moſt part are obnoxious and ominous to the Commons and Commonwealth.

Laſtly, in the behalfe of the ſaid Pattent and Pattentees, there can no iuſt nor good defence be made, or matter of worth be alledged. Wherefore and in tender conſideration of the aforeſaid premiſſes, we the aforeſaid poore Clerkes your humble ſuppliants, do humbly beſeech you to be a meanes that our petition and certificates being by the Subcommittee for grieuances committed into the Bag in the houſe, may be called to be read, and that a day may be appointed for the hearing of the cauſe, and the bringing in of the ſaid Letters Pattents, as in many like caſes of grieuances precedent: and we ſhall daily pray for you in particular, and for the whole bodie of this Aſſembly.

Broadsides
24.19